



Parental Involvement Strategy 2013



NORTH AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL



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1 Foreword

We should never underestimate the importance of the thousands of parents and carers who give up a huge part of their lives to raise their children and help them to learn and develop.

The Council knows just how valuable this influence is on our children's lives and learning.

We know that children do better at school and go on to achieve more in life when their parents and schools work together. By developing this Parental Involvement Strategy we want to ensure that parents are fully involved in their children's learning so they can have the best start in life.

Tony Gurney

Cabinet Member for Education Attainment and Achievement

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Background

Parental involvement is well embedded within North Ayrshire. We recognise the importance and benefits of working with parents and continue to develop this partnership.

In 2006 a Parental Involvement Strategy Group was set up in accordance with The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 to support the development of parental involvement. The group consisted of parents and representatives from a variety of sectors across Education and Skills. Their remit was to:

- **provide guidance to schools and parents on the establishment of a Parent Council**
- **develop a draft constitution with Parent Councils**
- **develop a draft Parental Involvement Strategy for consultation with parents and others**
- **promote and support school-parent partnerships**

The Parental Involvement Strategy has been successful and we now need to look at how we can continue to develop.

In 2012 a review group was established consisting of representation from Quality Improvement Service, Parent Councils, Primary and Secondary Schools, Pupil Support and Early Years. The group evaluated the strategy to ensure it was impacting on practice and to give parents and schools the opportunity to look at how we could continue to improve parental involvement through working in partnership.

A consultation took place with Parent Councils, parents, schools and children to identify how effective the strategy was and to identify the way forward.

This updated strategy should ensure that we continue to work effectively in partnership with parents to continue to develop:

- **Learning at Home**
- **Home/School Partnership**
- **Parental Representation**

Parents were consulted and the figures below indicate that although a high percentage of parents are satisfied with the level of involvement in schools there are some areas that need to be improved.

- **71% of parents felt they were involved in their child's education and learning**
- **84% of parents felt welcomed into the school**
- **78% of parents were confident to express their views about education to schools**
- **62% of parents felt they were in partnership with the school**
- **62% of parents received information on how to help their child's learning at home**
- **46% of parents felt their views were represented through the Parent Council**
- **71% of parents felt well informed about the curriculum**
- **74% of parents felt well informed about their child's progress and learning**



The main points for action arising from the 2012 review of Parental Involvement Strategy are as follows:

- the content of the Parental Involvement Strategy needs to be shared more widely with all parents in a simpler format
- schools need to continue to develop ways to involve parents more fully
- parents need to be encouraged to play a more active role in decision making
- parent councils need to develop strategies to involve all parents
- communication needs to be improved at all levels

Action Plan

We will achieve this by:

- providing an information leaflet for all parents explaining the aim of the Parental Involvement Strategy and the part they play in it
- delivering training and information sharing sessions for schools to develop good practice
- providing opportunities for parents to become more involved
- providing opportunities for Parent Councils to share good practice
- exploring successful practice and making use of the variety of methods available to improve communication

3 Purpose of the Strategy

In the recently published national Parenting Strategy it states “valuing and supporting Scotland’s parents is one of the single best ways of giving the nation’s children the best start in life”.

In North Ayrshire we aim to involve parents in a meaningful way to ensure children and families are supported to achieve their potential.

It is evident that effective parental involvement has clear benefits for children, parents and the education authority and this strategy aims to help all families to be:

- involved in their child’s education and learning
- welcomed as active participants in the life of the school
- able to support their child’s learning at home
- encouraged to express their views on education and work in partnership with schools and early years’ centres



Parental involvement starts from the first point of contact with an early years centre or school. The importance of developing positive relationships at the start of a child's education is vital and cannot be over emphasised. Parents of pre-school children must be given the opportunity to be fully included in the Parental Involvement Strategy.

Parents have a central role both as partners in their child's learning and in the wider life and work of the school. Parents are already involved in supporting their child's learning in a variety of ways. They support attendance, homework, volunteering, dress code, parents groups and they provide valuable links with the local community.

We will continue to create new opportunities for parents, schools, young people, communities and the Council to work together.

The requirements of the Disability Discriminations Act (DDA, Additional Support Legislations (ASL)) as amended 2009, Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Legislation underpin this strategy and should be taken account of in all associated procedures.

The strategy recognises that not all parents find it easy to become involved in their child's education and we must continue to work to build relationships with all parents.

Head Teachers have a clear role in leading the parental involvement agenda through developing partnerships with their parent body and ensuring the school offers a warm welcome to all parents, taking account of their differing needs and circumstances, while involving them in decisions affecting their child's education.



4 Principles of the strategy

- **parents, pupils and all staff are partners in the education process and each have a role to play**
- **real parental involvement can only take place when everyone commits to developing an ethos of mutual trust and respect**
- **parents and families are the most important influence on their child's attitudes, behaviour and achievement - good parental involvement will influence this in a positive way**
- **all parents must be encouraged to take part in parental involvement and consultation**



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Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone involved in the education of children should actively promote the principles of the strategy and all parents should be encouraged to be involved and work within the spirit of the strategy.

The Corporate Director (Education and Skills) North Ayrshire Council will:

- ensure that each establishment has appropriate support and resources to implement the strategy effectively
- be responsive to issues raised by parents
- ensure the rights and responsibilities of parents inform educational planning and delivery

All establishments will have a Parental Involvement Policy and it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that parents of all children are actively involved in this.

Parent Councils will provide the link between schools, the parent forum and the community.



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Promoting Parental Involvement

Positive leadership and a clear message that the school welcomes partnership with parents is essential for good parental involvement.

Successful partnerships should be based upon:

- a genuine two way exchange of information
- trust and openness
- a commitment to shared goals
- a willingness to support the child/young person/parent
- the development and maintenance of high expectations among children, parents and staff
- a commitment to ensure that each child will achieve his/her potential

North Ayrshire Council's Education and Skills Service will promote the involvement of parents in their child's education, in the life of the school and will respond to any reasonable requests for information.

The Head Teacher and school staff will provide advice and information to all parents and when required will arrange access to school records, except in certain circumstances where allowing access may put another person at risk.

Schools that successfully manage to stay in touch with parents use a wide range of formal and informal approaches that are reviewed and updated regularly. Some of these include:

- **membership of the parent council/parent teacher association**
- **school meetings and social events**
- **letters and newsletters**
- **face-to-face informal contact**
- **emails, websites and text services**
- **parental information sessions**
- **workshops**
- **open days/evenings**
- **school reports**

Schools must provide advice and information to parents about their own child and their progress in school. When parents are fully involved in the curriculum they are able to make valuable contributions to their child's education.

School reports and parents' evenings are the most obvious ways to provide this information and it is essential that the child plays an active part in this process. Schools are developing interesting less formal ways of sharing information where children and parents are fully involved.

Schools should use a variety of ways to provide information to parents including:

- **information sessions on the curriculum**
- **information of how and when progress will be reported**
- **explaining policies, teaching methods and assessment procedures**
- **involvement in reviews, audits, questionnaires**
- **providing opportunities for parents to learn how they can contribute to their child's education**

Parents can be actively involved in supporting children's learning through:

- **becoming a parent helper**
- **supporting activities and outings**
- **contributing to topic work**
- **attending presentations by children**
- **supporting learning through homework and paired reading**
- **supporting identified targets for learning or behaviour**

Some parents, through other commitments, may not be able to be as involved as they would wish. However, sharing information through newsletters, information sheets or websites can be very helpful.

There are a number of factors which may discourage or inhibit parents' involvement in their child's education such as language and difficulties with written communications or challenging family circumstances. North Ayrshire Council is committed to working with schools to overcome barriers to parental involvement through:

- **The Home-School Inclusion Service**
- **The Pupil Welfare Officers**
- **Mediation Services**
- **Extended Outreach Team**
- **Community Learning and Development Services**
- **Joint working with key partners, for example Social Services, Health and Housing**
- **Family Support Service**

Schools can also help by building meaningful relationships with parents and signposting them when appropriate.



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Promoting and Supporting Parent Councils

All parents who have a child attending school are automatically members of the Parent Forum for that school. Membership of the forum means that parents can present their views on matters such as the quality and standards of education at the school and any other matters of interest to parents.

These views can be expressed to the Head Teacher of the school, the local authority and inspection team based within Education Scotland.

North Ayrshire Council encourages parents to set up a Parent Council for their school.

All parents in North Ayrshire have access to the Parental Involvement Act, the implications for parental involvement and any relevant information leaflets that have been distributed. Regular information from the Scottish Government and the National Parent Forum of Scotland is provided to the Parent Council Chairs.

As a member of the Parent Forum parents can expect to:

- **receive information about the school and its activities**
- **be involved in ways and times that suit them**
- **be asked their opinion by the Parent Council on issues relating to the school and education it provides**
- **be able to participate in deciding how the Parent Council is constituted and operates**

North Ayrshire Council continues to:

- **promote the establishment and operation of Parent Councils within each school**
- **support Parent Councils to enable them to carry out their functions**
- **advise and inform the Parent Council on any matter in response to reasonable requests**
- **consult with Parent Councils and allocate funding for administrative expenses, training, and costs incurred in carrying out functions**
- **include Parent Council members in the appointment procedures for Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers**
- **remove barriers which prevent parental involvement**
- **provide a designated member from North Ayrshire Council's Education and Skills Service to give advice and guidance to Parent Councils and schools in relation to parental involvement**
- **organise training, regular events and meetings with Corporate Director (Education and Skills) and Head of Service for Education 3-18 years**
- **include parents in quality assurance procedures**
- **provide services and accommodation**
- **provide insurance cover**

Parent Councils and the Appointment of Senior Staff

North Ayrshire Council's Recruitment and Selection Procedures have been reviewed to take account of the requirements of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, the Parental Involvement in Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher Appointments (Scotland) Regulations 2007, and the associated Scottish Government Guidance regarding the participation of Parent Councils in the appointment of Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers in schools.

In relation to vacancies for these posts North Ayrshire Council consults with the relevant Parent Council regarding job descriptions and person specifications, and invites the school's Parent Council to participate in the shortlist and interview panel.

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Links with other Policy Areas

The Parental Involvement Strategy links with a variety of other current policy areas including:

- **Getting it Right for Every Child (2007)**
- **Curriculum for Excellence (2004)**
- **North Ayrshire's Parenting and Family Support Strategy**
- **The Early Years Framework (2008)**
- **Equally Well (2008)**
- **Being Well – Doing Well (2004)**
- **Equalities Act 2010**
- **North Ayrshire Council's Customer Complaints Procedure**
- **National Parenting Strategy (2012)**
- **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, Additional Support Legislations (ASL) as amended 2009)**



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Sharing Concerns

North Ayrshire Council's Education and Skills Service aims to provide a high quality service for all children and parents, however there are occasions when things can go wrong. It is important that there is clear guidance which can be followed to ensure concerns are addressed and a resolution found which is in the best interest of the child.

The strategy takes into account North Ayrshire Council's Customer Complaints Procedure and all establishments should ensure that there are clear guidelines for parents to follow to address their concerns in line with authority guidance.

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Evaluation and Monitoring of the Strategy

The strategy will be reviewed with relevant stakeholders in 2016 (or earlier if appropriate) and changes made where necessary.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the Parental Involvement Strategy will be an on-going process managed by the Officer with responsibility for parental involvement.

Evaluation

Parents' views will be sought on a regular basis informally at Parent Council Chairs' meetings and more formally through a range of questionnaires and other appropriate methods.

Evaluation within Schools

The Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) self-evaluation guide 'How Good is our School' should be used in conjunction with this strategy to support schools in evaluating their current practices and in identifying strengths and areas for further development. Schools should ensure that the views of all parents are taken into account.

Parent Councils should be involved in evaluating the strategy within schools. This can be done by surveys or focus groups.

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Conclusion

This strategy should support the promotion of meaningful parental involvement throughout North Ayrshire resulting in improved opportunities for children and families.



Useful Links...

North Ayrshire Council

www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Early Years Framework

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Years-and-Family

Children Scotland Act 1995

www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1995/ukpga_19950036_en_1

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/04/22133503/35042

Education (additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2004/asp_20040004_en_1

HALL 4

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/04/15161325/13423

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act) 2006

www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2006/asp_20060008_en_1

Getting it Right for Every Child

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices/girfec

Better Health, Better Care: Action Plan 2007

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/11103453/0

Scottish Guidelines to Support Parents with Learning Disabilities

www.sclcd.org.uk/sclcd-projects/working-with-parents/parenting-guidelines

Pre-Birth to Three Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families, Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010

www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears

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